CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 19 May 1998, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Al-Hussami (Syrian Arab Republic)

GE.98-61842 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): I declare open the 793rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I should like at the outset to extend on behalf of all of us a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, H.E. Mr. K. Tokaev, who will address the Conference this morning. The members of the Conference will recall that three years ago we were privileged to receive H.E. the President of Kazakhstan in this very council chamber. The presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs among us today testifies to the continued interest attached by his Government to our work. I am sure his statement will be followed with interest. Besides the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, I have on my list of speakers for this morning the representatives of Algeria, Finland and the Czech Republic as well as France. I now invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, H.E. Mr. K. Tokaev, to address the Conference.

Mr. TOKAEV (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, first of all, allow me to congratulate you on the occasion of your accession to the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament and to thank you for your extremely efficient leadership over this outstanding forum. I also extend my gratitude to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Erwin Hofer, for his efforts to re-energize our Conference in the important tasks it faces. Let me also sincerely thank the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their assistance and contribution to the work of the Conference.

The Conference on Disarmament is a unique multilateral forum which has proved in practice its efficiency in terms of conduct of negotiations on the most acute disarmament issues. The range of issues discussed within the framework of the Conference encompasses all spheres related to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms control.

Kazakhstan gives its due to the outstanding success of the Conference in drafting such documents as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This convincingly demonstrates the huge potential of the Conference and its constructive and effective impact on disarmament processes.

Kazakhstan is devoted to the strengthening of international security, the development of cooperation among States and the enhancement of the role of international organizations in the settlement of global problems and conflicts. Proceeding from these fundamental goals, Kazakhstan makes every effort to achieve progress in the disarmament process. We consider that the observer status received by Kazakhstan in 1996 was an adequate response from the international community to our country's actions in the disarmament process. We are deeply grateful to the Conference for the proper evaluation of the activity of our country in the process of elimination of the nuclear threat.

(Mr. Tokaev, Kazakhstan)

Having signed the CTBT, Kazakhstan thereby stated its desire to work towards the strengthening of a nuclear test control regime. Modernization of the seismic station of Makanchi, listed in the first tier of the Global Monitoring System, will be launched this year. In September, in Kurchatov, there will be an international conference on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, devoted to the tenth anniversary of the first joint experiment on nuclear test control. Russian, American and Kazakh specialists and experts, as well as representatives of international organizations, will take part in the Conference. During the Conference, it is planned to conduct a demonstration for explosion calibration purposes at the former Semipalatinsk test site.

The post-confrontational development gives an additional impetus to multilateral negotiations with the aim of achieving specific solutions in the field of international security, arms limitation and disarmament. The priority attached to the need for nuclear disarmament is confirmed by annual resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. However, without taking real steps in this area, we will never be able to reach our goal. We should bear in mind that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation issues are intertwined and international security can be achieved only through the concerted action of nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS). In this context, we support the importance of bilateral and multilateral discussion of the problems related to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

On 13 May, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan made an official statement concerning nuclear tests in India. As a State which, by its own will, abandoned its nuclear heritage and firmly devoted itself to the non-proliferation regime, Kazakhstan cannot but state its deep concern over the fact that the development of nuclear weapons in India endangers the intention of the international community to make progress on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Moreover, nuclear tests in India have had a negative impact on the development of the situation in the region. Unfortunately, we face a real threat of escalation in the nuclear arms race.

On the threshold of the next century, the world community has collided with the threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons. With much regret, it must be stated that a new century will not be more secure, rather that it will be less secure compared to the twentieth century. But interminable pessimism should not hang over the world community like Damocles' sword. Concrete actions are needed to neutralize the nuclear threat.

We believe that the Conference on Disarmament, without delay, already this year should initiate negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty which will make a significant contribution to the NPT on the eve of the Review Conference which will take place in the year 2000. It is desirable to have all States possessing fissile material involved in negotiations on a cut-off treaty.

As far as Kazakhstan is concerned it has made, and will continue to make, its own contribution to the non-proliferation of nuclear materials and technologies. The proof of that was the shipment of 600 kilograms of highly enriched uranium in 1994 to the United States under IAEA safeguards. My

(Mr. Tokaev, Kazakhstan)

country is ready to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). It should be noted that since 1997, Kazakhstan has been abiding by the NSG's governing principles in its export of nuclear materials and technologies.

Kazakhstan expresses its strong interest in joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Kazakhstan, possessing considerable scientific and technological potential in the missile industry, and having a space centre on its territory, can make a significant contribution to this regime and promote cooperation in the area of the peaceful use of missile technologies.

Provision of security assurances to the NNWS remains the focus of discussions at the Conference. NNWS have advanced a fair demand, believing that by renouncing the possession of nuclear weapons by meeting their obligation under article II of the NPT, they have a right to receive firm, legally binding, so-called "negative" security assurances. We believe that one of the ways to solve this issue is to adopt a protocol on security assurances which will be part and parcel of the NPT. It should be noted that the formulation of the obligation not to use nuclear weapons against NNWS parties to the Treaty must be straightforward and unequivocal.

With the radical reduction of nuclear weapons, a thorough elaboration of the issues, concerning the place and role of conventional armed forces and arms in preserving peace and strategic balance acquires an important role.

A substantial part of the strategic balance mechanism is its multilateral nature, i.e. focused and concerted multilateral actions and cooperation. Kazakhstan believes that the process of radical reduction of conventional arms should have a regional as well as global character which, upon its implementation, would be equal to the movement towards universal and total disarmament.

Aimed at setting up an effective mechanism for discussions and consultations on the most pressing current security issues in Asia, the President of Kazakhstan, N. Nazarbaev, has put forward an initiative to convene a Conference on security-building measures in Asia. This idea was wholeheartedly supported by most regional States.

Kazakhstan reiterates its position to curb international arms trade. It is currently the most acute problem. While weapons are not the original cause of the conflicts per se, they act as powerful means to fan conflicts. All current regional conflicts prove this argument. We are convinced that the main task in this direction is to establish an international mechanism which will tackle this issue. The Register of Conventional Arms, which includes data on export-import of weapons, national production and State policy in this field, can serve as a basis for this mechanism. No doubt such transparency is required to prevent the destabilizing stockpiling of weapons in any region or excess accumulation of weapons in any State.

The nuclear disarmament process is of a multilateral nature and it is hard to accept that many States who have undertaken obligations under the NPT are prevented from direct participation in discussions of nuclear disarmament

(Mr. Tokaev, Kazakhstan)

problems within the framework of the Conference. Taking into consideration the universal nature of the issues being discussed, universal membership is strongly needed. This concept has been reaffirmed by the context of disarmament negotiations. Criteria for acceptance of new members were discussed in 1997 and we think that the membership of the Conference should be opened to any new State which effectively contributes to the disarmament process. I believe that Kazakhstan has the right to become a full-fledged member of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria)(translated from French): Mr. President, allow me to begin by congratulating you very warmly on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament and express our satisfaction at the way you are conducting our proceedings, after the outstanding work of your predecessor in this post, the Ambassador of Switzerland. It is a matter of great satisfaction to see in you Syria, a brother country and friend, presiding over our work. We appreciate the fact that His Excellency Mr. Tokaev, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, has honoured our current session with his presence, and we should like to echo your thanks to him. I also wish to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, the ambassadors of Russia, Turkey and the Republic of Korea.

My delegation has already spoken at the start of the session and conveyed its assessment, its conclusions and its priorities on all matters concerning our work. Today, now that we have established an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances as well as a set of mechanisms for consultation, including one entrusting the President with an identical mission with respect to nuclear disarmament, my delegation would like to share a number of conclusions and a number of concerns it feels with respect to a number of developments linked to the carrying out of nuclear tests in South Asia. While emphasizing its devotion to the spirit and the letter of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, my delegation wishes to emphasize with great seriousness that the outcome of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, held recently in Geneva, as well as the recent information on nuclear tests conducted in South Asia, referred to above, lead us to wonder about the real extent of non-proliferation achievements and about the willingness of all of us here to address nuclear disarmament as a task flowing from the individual and collective responsibility of States, of all States. Nuclear disarmament is now a matter of paramount political priority for all which must guarantee the integrity of all the processes leading to it and fundamental security needs for the non-nuclear-weapon States.

As my country has always underscored, it is an undeniable fact which we have not yet established in practice that non-proliferation is a sine qua non and a precondition for disarmament. In order for disarmament to be preserved and consolidated, it must be supported and reinvigorated, if it is not to be called into question, by serious and meaningful disarmament measures. Indeed, the interaction between these two dimensions is manifest: non-proliferation permits disarmament, and disarmament preserves and can consolidates it. What

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

has just occurred in South Asia - and this is a lesson which must be drawn - makes clear the urgent need to proceed to collective substantive work on nuclear disarmament construed as an objective, since it is equally urgent that non-proliferation should be consolidated and strengthened.

In this respect nuclear disarmament remains an inescapable objective, as the international community decided 20 years ago, one which is itself an integral component of general and complete disarmament. There is thus an urgent need, if it is to be achieved for concrete measures geared to a timetable, albeit an indicative one, to be collectively drawn up within the multilateral forum afforded by the Conference on Disarmament. The first of these measures has been identified and acknowledged in principle since 1995: the prohibition of fissile material. However, this measure is not sufficient by itself, as it must from part of a multilateral dynamic encompassing other measures on which our collective thinking must focus and on which we will have to make choices when we have arrived at a common vision of the issues. Furthermore, if the fissile material ban is to be genuinely incorporated into this bidimensional logic of preserving and strengthening non-proliferation and contributing to nuclear disarmament, the negotiations will be really worthwhile only if existing stocks are the subject of focused work within the Conference on Disarmament.

These are the two most urgent tasks which the Conference on Disarmament must undertake with respect to nuclear disarmament if it is to avoid a repetition of events identical to those we have just experienced in South Asia, and in order to complete work already embarked upon by the international community in other forums such as the preparations for the entry into force of the CTBT, which we hope will take place on schedule, the extension of nuclear-weapon-free zones to regions which currently do not benefit from such arrangements, as well as the universal extension to all without exception, and the full implementation by all, also without exception, of the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

International relations have frequently gone through periods favourable to progress in nuclear disarmament, whether they be marked by détente or by tension. In periods of détente the evaluation is more dispassionate and action more considered. In times of tension, action is more prompt and the results therefore more decisive. That is why we must reject inactivity. And we must also emphasize the twofold responsibility of all States, and firstly that of the nuclear-weapon States, an individual responsibility, given the obligations stemming from the treaties to which they are parties, and a collective responsibility, given the ambition of the international community to construct a world which is totally free from nuclear weapons.

Mr. President, we hope that the consultations which you are responsible for conducting on item 1 on our agenda will lead to concrete results. We set great store by that work and would like to believe that all delegations, inspired by the hopes and the questions inherent in this undertaking of disarmament, can work together, subject to the necessary balances, to reach consensus decisions that will ensure that essential interaction between non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you for the target-oriented way you have conducted our work as the President of the Conference on Disarmament and have led the Conference to take the decision of 26 March on the programme of work. I would also like to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Norberg of Sweden and Ambassador Hofer of Switzerland, for their crucial contribution to our work.

In this connection I would also like to extend my congratulations to Ambassador de Icaza for his appointment as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on NSAs, to Ambassador Palihakkara, Ambassador Campbell, Minister Counsellor Grecu, Ambassador Naray, Ambassador Hofer and Ambassador Illanes for their appointments as Special Coordinators. I assure them the full cooperation of the delegation of Finland in their demanding tasks.

After the appointment of our colleagues for the various tasks set out in the March decision, we look forward to a productive CD session. However, there is no time to waste. The March decision is a challenging one and it is our common goal to get, as soon as possible, practical results which would guide the work of the Conference on Disarmament for this year and further.

According to the March decision the President of the Conference shall pursue intensive consultations and seek the views of its members on appropriate methods and approaches for dealing with agenda item 1, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". Mr. President we welcome your announcement last week that you would initiate your consultations on this subject immediately. In this context all proposals and views need to be taken into consideration. South Africa and Belgium have made proposals relating to consultation mechanisms. At some stage those proposals could help us to come to an organization understanding on how we could develop the consultations further.

As we have stated previously, Finland places special importance on starting negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as proposed in February by Austria. We consider cut-off as the indispensable next step forward in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the CD will be able to establish an ad hoc committee for the FMCT on the basis of the agreed mandate.

We welcome the decision to establish in the CD an ad hoc committee under agenda item 4, entitled "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". We are glad that Ambassador de Icaza of Mexico has taken this complex issue in his experienced hands.

The establishment of the first ad hoc committee in the CD since the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty is significant as such. We hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on NSAs building on its past work and subsequent developments, will be able to take concrete positive steps towards global, legally binding arrangements. We emphasize the decision made by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference on adherence to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State as a prerequisite for NSAs.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

In 1994 the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) came close to an agreement on starting negotiations on confidence-building measures. PAROS is an item which deals with preventive measures. It is of importance because there is no multilateral agreement banning the deployment of weapons other than weapons of mass destruction in outer space. It is our view that we should look at the material produced by the Ad Hoc Committee a few years ago. It seems to us that confidence-building and transparency measures could be appropriate steps to start with on this item.

Finland welcomes the decision to appoint Ambassador Campbell of Australia to resume his task as a Special Coordinator for anti-personnel landmines. Recognizing the importance of the Ottawa Convention, we continue to believe that the CD can make a contribution to the solution of the global APL problem. It is my understanding that many countries that have joined the Ottawa convention agree now that the CD can do useful work, especially by negotiating a ban on transfers of APLs. It is important to seize the momentum now. We are confident that the Special Coordinator will do his utmost in order to present a mandate which would enable the ad hoc committee to start negotiations as soon as possible.

"Transparency in armaments" is an item that we traditionally consider as a conventional item. We believe that openness in armaments can promote mutual confidence and thus strengthen international security and stability. The CD work on this issue is closely linked to the strengthening of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We hope that the consultation process by the Special Coordinator will raise interest and support for the United Nations Register and that the CD may be able to come up with some ideas that could be used by the United Nations Expert Group in this matter or even do some complementary work in the area of transparency.

In addition to the above-mentioned substantive items, we are pleased at the reappointment of the Special Coordinator of the review of the CD agenda, the expansion of membership and improved and effective functioning. The review of the agenda, membership and working methods of the CD and their adjustment to today's needs are in line with the efforts being made in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and in the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

To conclude the decision adopted by the Conference on 26 March is broad and challenging. The President of the Conference, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee and the Special Coordinators all have demanding tasks ahead in identifying which items are ready for fruitful negotiations now and which may require further preparatory work. The cooperation and flexibility of all delegations are needed for a successful outcome.

Mr. SVOBODA (Czech Republic): Mr. President, as it is the first time my delegation takes the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of this significant post, and to express our support and appreciation of your work.

(Mr. Svoboda, Czech Republic)

Allow me to refer again to the debate which took place at the last meeting and to inform you and the CD plenary that the Minster for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic has also released a statement on the first series of Indian nuclear tests on 11 May 1998. I quote: "The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic has received with concern and disappointment the news about the Indian nuclear tests carried out on 11 May 1998. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic fully supports the process of relaxation of tension in the world and in this particular region, identifying itself with the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and believing that this step by India goes against the spirit of international treaties aimed at the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing. The position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic was presented on 13 May 1998 to the Indian Ambassador in Prague during his call on the Director-General of the political Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs".

I am sure that at least the same extent of concern relates to the other two tests of last Wednesday, and I wish on behalf of the Czech delegation to join the relevant statement of the European Union presidency presented here by the distinguished representative of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Mr. President, we meet today for the last time under your authority. My delegation would like to congratulate you on the achievements you are able to cite at the end of your term. You have managed to put our Conference back to work. We now have to draw maximum benefit from this result in order to meet the expectations the international community places in our forum and contribute, as far as we are able, to take up the challenges with which we are suddenly faced. The Conference must make this contribution in two fields, that of reflection and that of action.

For 20 years France has consistently upheld an approach based on certain essential principles. The first is that disarmament is a universal right, equal for all and enshrined by the Charter of the United Nations. To be realistic, we must move forward in stages. The second is that disarmament is a matter for all. And when we say all, we really mean all, that is, the whole international community, represented here in the shape of member States and observer States which can and must participate fully in our deliberations in a manner commensurate with their interest in the subjects we are addressing. The third idea, finally, is that the global approach to disarmament must take account of particular regional situations. Analysis of the threats to security in one part of the world or another as perceived by the States in question, is necessary in order to decide on the most effective measures and to reach the consensus which is essential for their implementation.

The circumstances are particularly appropriate for the application of these ideas today. I shall not revert to the recent developments which are on all our minds. France's position on this subject was expressed last week. But in this context where peace could appear to be under threat in one part of the world and where strategic stability is affected, I should like to stress the importance of the consultations which have begun, under your authority, and with the help of the outgoing and incoming Presidents, on the fundamental

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

issue of nuclear disarmament. On 26 February of this year I stated that my delegation was ready to discuss all issues related to nuclear disarmament before the Conference, in the most transparent possible manner. We are all the more prepared to do so now that the need appears even more pressing. It is true that the discussions now starting do not fit into the context of the mythical ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament so ardently sought by some. But for all those who are more interested in the result than in the formal framework, it is clear that the format agreed to discuss nuclear disarmament here, thanks to you and to your predecessors, Mr. President, will permit a discussion which is complete sustained and free of concessions. It must be able to meet the needs of each of those involved for dialogue, until such time as, having agreed on specific action to be taken, we can commit ourselves to actual negotiations by setting up the appropriate ad hoc committee. This action alone would reflect awareness within this body of the changing realities around it. It would also signify the creation of a forum for dialogue which can contribute to lowering tensions.

My country intends to contribute to consideration of nuclear disarmament in a constructive manner. Since the day when, on 13 June 1995, the President of the Republic announced simultaneously the temporary resumption of French nuclear tests and the decision to sign the CTBT, France has been proud of the progress it has made in this field. Allow me to illustrate my remarks by reminding you of the President of the Republic's decision to dismantle our land-based component in February 1996. The related aspects of this decision-redeployment of units, transfer and safe management of fissile material, but also aid for regions affected by these decisions and conversion of several military sites - will give rise to further heavy financial costs for several years. The principle of sufficiency which governs our deterrent has had the result of limiting to four the number of our missile-launching nuclear submarines. It is perhaps not without value to recall that France has no tactical weapons.

With regard to de-targeting and downgrading of the state of alert, developments here should also be emphasized. On 26 September 1997, France announced that following the dismantling of the surface-to-surface missiles deployed on the Plateau d'Albion, none of the nuclear components of the French deterrent force were targeted. Finally, the levels of alert of the air and submarine forces were downgraded in the light of the new strategic context. As a total, the French military budget now represents only 3 per cent of gross domestic product instead of 3.5 per cent in 1990. The share of this budget devoted to the nuclear force is now only 10 per cent instead of 17 per cent in 1990. This means that this share has fallen even more rapidly than France's military budget - halving of nuclear appropriations since 1990 despite the additional costs of all kinds caused by arms reductions. This shows that the adjustments linked to the new international environment have taken the form of concrete and measurable decisions.

With regard to the production of fissile material, the halting of the production of plutonium for explosive military uses in 1992 and the production of highly enriched uranium in 1996 is well known. It is true that other nuclear Powers have announced a halt to their production. But in this field

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

France has taken the risk of dismantling the corresponding installations. The operations for a total close-down are beginning in 1998 at the two sites of Marcoule and Pierrelatte.

This means two things. On the one hand, even if a sudden shift in the international situation and the attitude of certain key players might render it necessary, the production of these materials could not physically be resumed at those sites. Meanwhile, in the absence of certainty as to the behaviour of others, and while the threshold States are developing their capabilities in this field, the financial sacrifice which has been made is enormous because the cost of dismantling and site clearance amounts to several dozens of billions of francs.

Everyone remembers the name of Mururoa. The Pacific test site is now closed. In a few days IAEA will present a report on whether these tests had a harmful effect on the environment and health of the region's population, as a last stage in the process of closing the site. All this shows that the precise and formal commitments entered into in 1996 by the head of State, and translated into legal terms by the signature of the CTBT in September 1996 and its ratification early last month have been complied with in good faith. The speed of the process shows how seriously we are complying with our commitments. Indeed, we have gone further. I would like to emphasize the exceptional nature of our action, which is once again shown by its irreversible nature. The installations specifically designed for testing have been dismantled and all the dismantling operations at Mururoa and Fangataufa should be completed by the summer of 1998.

Ultimately, the judgement which may be made depends on the point of view of the observer. There is still much to be done in order to bring about the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. On the other hand, the distance already covered in the space of a few years by a country such as France is considerable, and the efforts required to translate the decisions taken fully into facts will continue for a long time to come. Given the level of strict sufficiency of its arsenal, France's effort in terms of nuclear disarmament is proportionately second to none.

This effort must be continued in the multilateral area. The initiation of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices, the "cut-off", is essential. Allow me to recapitulate the substance of this issue. It is not the direct purpose of the "cut-off", any more than it is that of the CTBT, a treaty which France and Great Britain were the first nuclear-weapon States to ratify, on 6 April, to reduce existing arsenals; the "cut-off", the CTBT and global nuclear reductions are three distinct but complementary objectives. However, just as the comprehensive nuclear test ban put an end to the development of new, sophisticated generations of nuclear weapons and curbed their qualitative improvement, a ban on the production of fissile material will limit the quantities of material which could be used in such weapons. The combination of these two bans will facilitate further reductions in nuclear weapons as a whole, beyond the bilateral negotiations and efforts made on a unilateral basis by countries such as France.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

Conversely, if States which have the capacity to do so can continue to develop new sophisticated generations of nuclear weapons or to produce new quantities of fissile material for such weapons, the overall reduction in the number of operational weapons will quickly reach its limits and will be reversible at any time as a result of developments in the international strategic context or a national context. Hence these two treaties are essential in order to contain the nuclear build-up and proliferation in all its forms. The "cut-off" also has a unique dimension because it relates to fissile material, that is, the very core of any weapon or explosive device. That is why controls over nuclear materials were put in place as soon as the NPT entered into force in 1970 at the heart of the IAEA safeguards regime. Since then, the diffusion of knowledge and the liberalization of trade have developed in such a way that making it impossible to obtain military-grade fissile material has become the ultimate obstacle to the manufacture of explosive nuclear devices by States or non-State groups. At the same time, the risk of illicit trafficking in nuclear materials has grown, partly as a result of the end of the nuclear arms race and the accompanying measures to effect an overall reduction in these nuclear weapons.

A universal halt to the production of materials for explosive nuclear purposes and the verification of such halt are therefore necessary for regional and international peace and security.

A treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would comprise a uniform commitment by all States parties and would thus be a non-discriminatory instrument: the ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons which is already contained in the commitments made by non-nuclear-weapon States when they became party to the NPT would be extended to other States. This would also mean the establishment of a universal and effective verification regime, in accordance with the Shannon mandate. This regime would result in the implementation of safeguards at all installations in the world which produce fissile material for nuclear weapons. The universal implementation of this ban and its strict verification will maximize the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime.

For three years my country together with others has been calling for the immediate initiation and rapid conclusion of negotiations on such a universal and non-discriminatory treaty, on the basis of the Shannon report and the mandate included in it. France supports Austria's initiative, which, following the Federal Republic of Germany last year, proposed such a decision this year. We are convinced that this decision can be taken rapidly and that it must be taken with the participation of all States whose absence would make an agreement to ban fissile material for nuclear weapons practically meaningless. Such negotiations can and must begin without delay and without preconditions of any kind. We are all aware that the combination of the Shannon report and mandate offer everyone an opportunity to raise all issues in the manner that each deems most appropriate. I am aware that recent developments in a region of the world which I mentioned earlier may make it more easy for some and more difficult for others to accept the launching of such negotiations. It is not France's intention - quite the contrary - to ask those who feel threatened today to make a supplementary effort. But it is France's hope that on the eve of such long, such difficult and such crucial

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

negotiations as those on the "cut-off", everyone appreciates that an agreement of principle on the initiation of such negotiations would constitute a confidence-building measure, taken on the basis of the sovereign equality of States, which would reduce tensions and relaunch a process of normalization in the region in question. That is in everyone's interest.

I emphasize - today we have the duty to begin these "cut-off" negotiations, without waiting any longer and without any sort of preconditions. We place our trust in you, Mr. President, to hold consultations as soon as possible on this fundamental issue and to put before us promptly a favourable consensus decision on Austria's proposal and the establishment of an ad hoc committee on the prohibition of fissile material.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I have been asked to request the floor this morning to draw attention to the further developments that have taken place and are taking place at this time in the dangerous situation that has arisen following India's five nuclear-weapons tests last week. My Government wishes to draw attention to the series of statements that have emanated from the highest levels of the Indian leadership on this issue.

Firstly, India's leaders have stated that they have "a big bomb" and that its command and control is in place. Therefore, it is clear that India has already weaponized its nuclear weapons capability. Secondly, the Indian leadership has further stated that India is a nuclear-weapon State. We would welcome a response from this Conference, and particularly from the major sponsors of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as to this declaration. Thirdly, India has stated that it will continue subcritical testing for nuclear weapons and refine designs, regardless of the CTBT. It claims equal rights with the five nuclear-weapon States. We would welcome a response to this assertion as well. Fourthly, the Indian leadership has stated that it is prepared to use nuclear weapons in case of an attack or an aggression. It is clear that this threat is held out in the case of either conventional or non-conventional use of force.

Yesterday the Secretary-General of the ruling party and Home Minister of India, Mr. Lal Krishna Advani, stated: "Islamabad should realize the change in the geo-strategic situation in the region and the world and roll back its anti-India policy, especially with regard to Kashmir. India's bold and decisive step to become a nuclear-weapon State has brought about a qualitative new stage in Indo-Pakistan relations, particularly in finding a solution to the Kashmir problem. It signifies India's resolve to deal firmly and strongly with Pakistan."

This situation, therefore, cumulatively - the testing, the policy declarations and now the threats, which by the way are matched by actual movement on the ground - has created a situation of grave crisis in our region. It is a situation of political, military and indeed nuclear crisis.

Pakistan has been asked to exercise restraint, and I believe that it will be apparent to all, through our responses, our statements and our actions, that we have acted with circumspection and restraint. But we have to respond to the threat which is now posed to our security and indeed to our

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

survival, and we must take into account not only our capabilities but also the responses of the international community. I must confess that the Government and people of Pakistan are deeply disappointed by the reactions of the international community to this grave and serious development that has taken place. Today we have seen examples of that pusillanimity. Some of our friends refer to the region in question as if it is some place on the Moon. Some of our friends speak of a test in South Asia. My dear friends, the test took place in India, not in South Asia. Why are our friends afraid even to speak, let alone act?

The Prime Minister of Pakistan has addressed a letter to the leaders of the Group of 8 who were meeting in London, and I would like to quote the text of this letter:

> "The nuclear testing, by India, of a whole range of weaponry, including systems which are Pakistan-specific, has multiplied the immediacy and the magnitude of the threat to our security. Besides fundamentally altering the precarious strategic balance, which contributed to the maintenance of tenuous peace, this Indian action has raised the possibility of aggressive military acts against Pakistan. You would certainly agree that overt weaponization by India is yet another manifestation of the highly irresponsible and reckless actions taken by India to escalate tensions in the region in recent weeks. The BJP Government has already made its aggressive designs against Pakistan a fundamental article of its policy agenda. In recent days it has taken steps to implement its designs, including military action across the Line of Control in Kashmir. In the face of these ominous developments, which pose an immediate threat to our security, we cannot be expected to remain complacent. I had, in April 1998, drawn your attention to the consequences that would ensue from India's induction of nuclear weapons. We are disappointed that our warnings were not heeded. The latest events have proven us completely right. We are once again being asked to exercise restraint at an extremely critical juncture on matters involving national security and survival. I trust that you will recognize and be receptive to Pakistan's legitimate need for self-defence."

I have already requested the secretariat to circulate this letter as an official document.

It is obvious that the security situation in South Asia has changed gravely for the worse, and so has the global situation changed for the worse. Pakistan's Secretary for Foreign Affairs has stated that we have initiated a review of the entire strategic situation. The Indian nuclear explosions, he said, have caused an immediate and direct threat to Pakistan. The balance of power has violently been tilted and nuclear asymmetries exacerbated. But our Prime Minister has added that Pakistan will not act in haste, and that we will choose our own time to respond to the new situation and the new threat that we are facing. What our Prime Minister has added in his conversations with the leaders of two major Powers is that the very essence of the non-proliferation regime has been shattered by India's actions. It is quite clear that non-proliferation as a political and legal norm has been completely torn apart

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by India's actions. The CTBT is now a questionable restraint as far as India is concerned, since it has already tested its weapons, and it can develop, by its own admission, whatever designs that it wishes.

The FMCT is also, in our view, an entirely irrelevant goal at this moment. It will not be responsive to the threat which Pakistan faces. It will not change for the better the erosion of the non-proliferation regime that has taken place. Therefore, we believe that statements such as that we have heard today from our distinguished friend from France and the proposal to set up an ad hoc committee on the so-called "cut-off" treaty are a waste of time. We should focus on the real danger to non-proliferation, not resort to tokenism at this time when my country and the non-proliferation regime, as well as international security, face the gravest threat that we have come across for many decades.

Pakistan will do what it has to do, and we will choose the time to do so. As far as the CD is concerned, we believe that it is obliged at this moment to adopt a strategic pause and to reflect on the situation that the world confronts following India's nuclear tests and its claim to have become a nuclear-weapon State. It is only when viable and effective answers are produced to the questions that have been raised by India's actions that this Conference can once again get back on track and begin to address the new security threat, the new security situation, that has arisen out of this action and build bridges towards restoring international stability and peace and a world in which nuclear weapons are no longer a threat. Today it is not only a particular region, to quote my friend from France, which faces a threat. It is the entire world which faces instability and an erosion of the norms of peace and stability that have guided us for so long.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): I think it is my duty to respond to the concern and disappointment expressed by my colleague and friend the Ambassador of Pakistan, insofar as he did not mention the representative of an anonymous region of the world, Europe, but France. I would just like to say this to him: France does not hesitate to name the players or protagonists in any process of destabilization in a region of the world. The statement issued following the meeting of the G-8 in Birmingham unambiguously condemned the Indian tests. Of course we appreciate that our Conference is not in a position, probably because of its very nature, to embark on the resolution of an issue which nevertheless is a matter of concern to all the States members of this Conference. What can the Conference do? Withdraw into a corner and do nothing, as usual? That is not our view. We have a possible decision on a subject which is still relevant in the short and the medium term, and that is why it seems to us, as well as to other delegations which have taken the floor this morning, that the initiation of negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for military purposes would have two advantages: to provide a response to the situation which we cannot provide, at least here, by other means, and to preserve more than ever the point of contact which exists here in Geneva in the interests of all.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): I am one of those admirers of Cartesian logic, but I must confess that I cannot for the life of me discern that logic in the

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statement of my dear friend Ambassador Bourgois just now: we cannot do anything about India's nuclear tests, so let's do something irrelevant in any case, since it will make us feel good that we can do something. That is not the response of a serious body such as the Conference on Disarmament. That is not the response of a serious Power such as France. We greatly admire France for its boldness, its stand of principle, its defence of freedom. I am afraid we have not seen too much of that in its response to India's test.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): As the term of office of my country, Syria, in the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament comes to an end, I leave this podium with a profound sense of satisfaction with what I have been able to achieve during this short period. The Presidential statement contained in document CD/1500 and the decision contained in document CD/1501 dated 26 March 1998, the provisions of which have been completed through the appointment of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee and the six Special Coordinators, will give a great impetus to this Conference and will place the Conference once again in a state of preparedness to achieve further progress. Needless to say, this important achievement could not have been made without your cooperation and your desire to facilitate the task of the President. I take this opportunity to address my sincere congratulations to their exellencies who have been selected to chair the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances and to occupy the posts of the six Special Coordinators in view of their high qualifications and extensive experience. I would also like to thank them for having accepted the tasks they have been entrusted with, tasks which no doubt will require them to make various sacrifices, but I am confident that they will gladly make those sacrifices in view of their belief in the noble aims of this Conference.

With regard to the implementation of paragraph 1 of the decision contained in document CD/1501, as I informed you during our last meeting, I have held a meeting with the former President of the Conference and the incoming President of the Conference during which we discussed in a preliminary manner various viewpoints concerning the most appropriate ways to handle the task which the Conference has assigned to us in connection with the item entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". This meeting made it possible to inform the troika of all the specific proposals that had been submitted on the various aspects of agenda item 1 and to examine ways and means to discharge our duties during the coming weeks. I would like to emphasize that I have noted a common resolve to continue monitoring this question carefully and patiently but with determination.

On this occasion, please allow me to draw your attention in particular to the successive disturbing indicators which highlight the dangers inherent in neglecting the current imbalance in controlling the non-proliferation systems and the nuclear test ban. The continued reluctance on the part of the States concerned to honour their commitments will undoubtedly exacerbate that imbalance and lead to grave consequences in more than one region of the world. The Conference on Disarmament is called upon today, more than at any time in the past, to assume its responsibilities in this respect and to move towards the rationalization and activation of its approach to the question of nuclear disarmament and the cessation of the nuclear arms race as quickly as possible before it is too late.

(The President)

Now I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Murat Sungar, the recently appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey, who is to succeed me in the Chair of the Conference. I wish to congratulate him on his assumption of this post and wish him success in his Presidential tasks. Finally, I wish to extend to all of you and, in particular, the group coordinators, my deep gratitude and appreciation for your kind understanding and your cooperation which was the best encouragement I could have received in discharging my mission. I also wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Geneva, for all the valuable advice that he has provided me with and I wish to thank all the members of the secretariat, in particular Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, for helping to facilitate my task. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all the staff of the secretariat, particularly the interpreters, all of whom have made our work not only possible but enjoyable. I thank you all.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Many thanks, Mr. President, for the message which you have just delivered and which my delegation intends to study with all due care. My delegation considers that today more than ever the Conference on Disarmament cannot indulge itself in the luxury of immobility. I therefore venture to request that at the conclusion of this meeting, and here in the same room, you convene an informal meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances for an initial exchange of views and the organization of the Committee's work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Arabic): That concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 28 May 1998 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.